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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2017
TAGS: KWBG PGOV PREL PTER IS KDEM
SUBJECT: BILIN CELEBRATES COURT VICTORY, BUT WILL CONTINUE CAMPAIGN

REF: A. TEL AVIV 2670

¶B. TEL AVIV 2715

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Bil'in residents celebrated the Israeli High Court's decision to reroute the separation barrier between Bil'in and the settlement of Modi'in Illit on September 7 and described the decision as a victory for non-violent resistance. However, Bil'in activist Muhammad al-Khatib said the victory was only partial, because the settlements will continue to occupy much of Bil'in's land. End summary.

BIL'IN CELEBRATES HIGH COURT DECISION

¶2. (U) The residents of the West Bank village of Bil'in held a rally on September 7 to celebrate the Israeli High Court ruling to reroute the separation barrier between Bil'in and the settlement of Modi'in Illit, which will restore a maximum of 1,600 dunums (roughly 395 acres) of Bil'in's land (reftel). PM Salam Fayyad led a cabinet delegation to the celebratory rally. Palestinian press has covered Bil'in's legal victory extensively and emphasized the effectiveness of non-violent resistance.

BIL'IN SATISFIED, BUT VICTORY LESS THAN COMPLETE

¶3. (C) Palestinian activist and Bil'in resident Muhammad al-Khatib told PolOff that his community is "satisfied" with the High Court's decision, but does not consider it a complete victory because it returned only part of Bil'in's land. He noted that the decision does not determine the new route of the barrier, so residents do not know the extent of the land they will retain. He also pointed out that the High Court's decision legitimizes nearby settlements which occupy land claimed by Bil'in. (Note: 395 acres is the maximum amount of land the villagers can recover. Ref B estimates 272 acres will be recovered.) In spite of that, al-Khatib told PolOff, Bil'in's success will help encourage Palestinians who advocate for non-violent resistance.
WALLES